

JL: CBS update, 9/23/75 BW

Esther called me from the south late this morning, she said to apologize for not calling me back yesterday. (I realized after she'd said she would that she would not be able to have my letter to Rather read to them yesterday because I mailed it only yesterday.)

She seemed to be her usual, calm and composed self but she said they had kept going last night into the wee small hours and today had weather trouble, the hurricane (which while it then had been downgraded from hurricane must still have been a bad storm with troubles caused by it). Something about sometime trying to get to Huntsville and being lost somewhere. Huntsville, I suppose, is someone going to Hurler.

After almost two hours of phone calls on a day when, fortunately, there had been none earlier! (Reminders in case they pick up again: Waldron and Finley.)

After apologizing she said she or they would be in touch after they got back to Washington, which from yesterday's conversation I take it will be day after tomorrow.

I have sent you copies of what I wrote and I presume that at some point you will call and perhaps we will discuss this more. However, at the very least I will want to have time to read every word of every paper CBS has filed in court and every in-chambers representation of which there is a record. If they decline this then I'll go no farther. While I can't imagine that my interpretation is nor right, I am willing to take the time to read these records to see if there is a possibility I misinterpreted the few words you read me.

This, what I regard as against Ray's interest, is the key thing. I'm not afraid of any dirtiness, although I consider that if Leiser has his way that will be their thing. Especially now. I've had dirtiness before, when I didn't expect it, too, as well as when I did. If you disagree, especially in terms of Ray's interest, let me know when you have time. No rush because I'm not going to take any time this week anyway, with all I have to do on PM.

Finley's call I go over in haste because you have no time to devote to it and I told him all I knew, which is much their morgue did not hold. It had nothing to do with any of this, but he had an idea while we were talking that could make a legit. story go through the day(s) of one held securely for the President's protection when he gets to Chicago soon.

Martin called me from Austin, where he is going over the files. But to begin with he asked me how I got along with and did I agree to be aired by CBS. I filled him in briefly on the two major issues. I told him of having told Rather and Esther about his presence so they could check with him on Leiser. I then said that from my experience Leiser did nothing that was for his ostensible purpose, preparing to prepare a script for Rather. I asked Martin if he noted anything that could have been for this purpose. His answer was "Not while I was there." Earlier I wrote you that Leiser stayed only about 15 minutes after Martin left.

As of now I'm inclined to push on this to make an inside-CBS record, with Martin as an impartial but professional observer and to ask that these CBS people get for themselves what Leiser got from me on this visit that they, as professionals, would regard as properly and adequately serving this purpose. Even if he wanted to get the feel of me he did not take a line calculated to accomplish this. One advantage of this will be to arm the honest people who, I rather suspect, are already in opposition to the top line that Leiser, clearly, is seeking to implement.